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November 21, 1961

(John - Memoir of Adm. Chancellor (Adm.))

This morning I talked for three-quarters of an hour with the Chancellor.

Either it was a bad morning for him or he has failed somewhat since last spring. He was either evasive or not making very much sense.

He started out by a very gloomy description of the world. The Russians, he said, were discouragingly powerful. They had 20 divisions in East Germany, 9 East German divisions, and 70 more Russian divisions near by. When I asked about the figures, he said they were authentic. Thus nothing could be done against them with conventional power. Nuclear power must not be used. Therefore, we must negotiate.

I questioned the "therefore".

The great trouble with the West, he indicated, was disunity. He was going to see Macmillan and de Gaulle in an effort to restore unity. With unity and strong American leadership a successful negotiation was possible. The Chancellor knew from his talks with Khrushchev in 1955 that Khrushchev's great fear was of the Chinese. There was room for negotiation, even though the Russians had taken East Berlin.

I kept asking the Chancellor why Khrushchev should make any concessions whatever if he were in the position pictured by the Chancellor. His only answer was that Khrushchev's fear of the Chinese would lead him to settle with the West while he could. I said that if I were advising Khrushchev I would tell him to stand pat on concluding a treaty with the GDR, to insist that the West - to use Kroll's term - "respect the sovereignty of the GDR," and to promise that access to West Berlin

would be

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would be completely free so long as all access, both by air and by land, was checked through East German personnel. To this the Chancellor replied that this would be good advice indeed. I asked: good advice for whom? He answered: for everybody.

I asked whether the Chancellor thought Mr. Khrushchev believed that we would use nuclear weapons over the Berlin issue. The Chancellor answered that while we must not use these weapons, we must not tell Khrushchev we would not do so. I explained that Strauss had told me last night that he had given the US Government a paper on the military steps that West Germany was willing to take and hoped that this was a step forward. The Chancellor did not respond. I explained the Acheson theory of the non-nuclear buildup in Europe. He thought that this was hopeless since no one, except the Germans, would do anything. At this depressing point he was taken away to see the President.

Dean Acheson